METAPHORICAL STRUCTURES IN ADVERTISING SLOGANS: A STYLISTIC AND COGNITIVE APPROACH

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Abstract. This article explores the stylistic features and cognitive functions of metaphorical structures in advertising slogans. Based on an analysis of 200 advertising slogans, the study categorizes metaphors into four types—personification, journey, war/conflict, and nature/elemental metaphors—and evaluates their frequency and function. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Blending Theory, the research highlights how metaphors enhance emotional engagement, shape consumer perception, and reinforce brand identity. The findings demonstrate that different industries strategically use metaphor types to align with consumer expectations and marketing goals.

Keywords: advertising slogans, metaphor, cognitive linguistics, stylistics, conceptual metaphor

Metaphors are widely used in advertising to simplify complex concepts and build strong emotional connections with consumers. Far from being mere stylistic embellishments, metaphors shape consumer perception by linking abstract brand messages with familiar experiences [Lakoff & Johnson, 1980]. This article examines the stylistic characteristics and cognitive functions of metaphorical structures in advertising slogans. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis of 200 advertising slogans, focusing on metaphor types and their frequency across different industries.

Lakoff and Johnson's [1980] Conceptual Metaphor Theory posits that metaphors are fundamental to human cognition. According to CMT, abstract concepts are understood through more concrete, embodied experiences. For example, the metaphor "Life is a journey" frames life in terms of movement, progress, and transformation. In advertising, such metaphors simplify abstract ideas and create relatable brand narratives.

Fauconnier and Turner's [2002] Blending Theory builds on CMT by explaining how meaning is constructed through the integration of multiple mental spaces. For instance, the slogan "Red Bull Gives You Wings" blends the domain of energy drinks with the concept of flight, resulting in a vivid image of freedom and vitality. This mental integration enhances memorability and emotional appeal.

Advertising metaphors are typically categorized into four main types, each serving distinct stylistic and strategic purposes: Personification Metaphors: Attribute human traits to non-human entities. Example: "The car that cares." Journey Metaphors: Emphasize progress,

transformation, or persistence. Example: "Keep Walking" [Johnnie Walker]. War/Conflict Metaphors: Highlight strength, dominance, and competitiveness. Example: "The Ultimate Driving Machine" (BMW). Nature/Elemental Metaphors: Associate products with durability, strength, and timelessness. Example: "Built Ford Tough."

A study of 200 advertising slogans reveals that metaphorical structures are commonly used to enhance brand messaging. The slogans were categorized into four main types:

Table 1

Metaphor Types and Their Frequency in Advertising Slogans

Metaphor Type	Example	Frequency	Percentage
Personification	"Red Bull Gives You Wings"	50	25%
Journey Metaphors	"Keep Walking" (Johnnie Walker)	45	22.5%
War/Conflict Metaphors	"The Ultimate Driving Machine" (BMW)	40	20%
Nature/Elemental Metaphors	"Built Ford Tough"	65	32.5%

Note. Data collected from 200 advertising slogans.

A pie chart below illustrates the distribution of metaphor types across the slogans.

Figure 1: Pie Chart of Metaphor Types
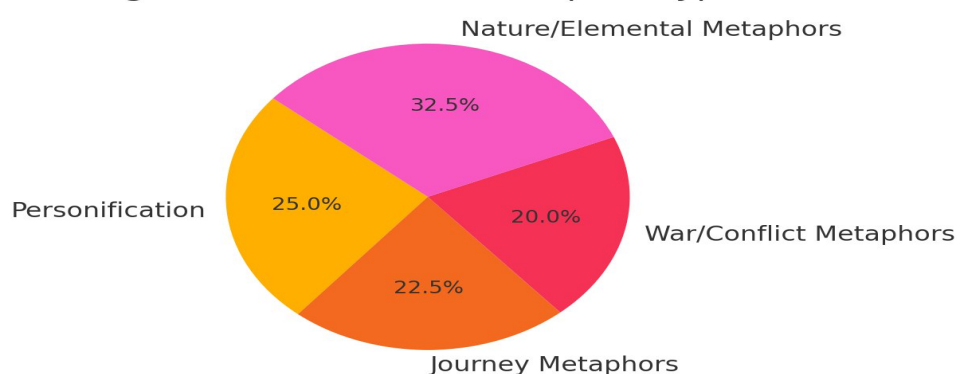
The findings show that nature and elemental metaphors are the most commonly used (32.5%), particularly in the automotive and outdoor gear

industries. These metaphors emphasize strength, resilience, and durability—qualities valued in products like vehicles and tools [Forceville, 2008].

Personification metaphors (25%) are prevalent in sectors that aim to create emotional engagement, such as beverages and cosmetics. By humanizing products, advertisers foster intimacy and trust [Aaker, 1997].

Journey metaphors (22.5%) are common in lifestyle and financial services, where branding often emphasizes self-improvement and progress [Kövecses, 2010].

War and conflict metaphors (20%) dominate in the technology and sports sectors, highlighting competition, power, and performance [Charteris-Black, 2004].

This study confirms that metaphors in advertising serve both stylistic and cognitive functions. By connecting brands with universally understood concepts, metaphors enhance emotional resonance and facilitate brand storytelling. The findings align with cognitive linguistic theories and suggest that metaphorical strategies vary by industry and audience expectations.

Further research could examine how metaphor preferences differ across cultures or how digital media platforms influence metaphor usage in contemporary advertising. Analyzing the evolution of metaphorical language in interactive or AI-generated ads would also be a valuable area for future exploration.

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